

Mod to Humvee Gives Soldiers Added Protection

Story and Photos by
Staff Sgt. Dave S. Thompson
211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan—

Army leaders on Kandahar Air Field (KAF), responding to the need to better protect their troops who patrol the dangerous badlands throughout Afghanistan, took matters into their own hands and devised a way to fortify the vulnerable soft-sided Humvee vehicle.

Due to a shortage of the Up-Armored version in the theater, Col. William Garrett III, the Task Force Warrior Base Commander, directed his Logistics Officer, Maj. Christopher Laneve, to find a way to upgrade the armor capabilities of the standard Hummer. Laneve went to work immediately. His first idea was to fill plastic fuel containers with sand and water and place them in an aluminum cradle on the vehicle. The containers however, did not stand up to ballistic testing and the idea was scrapped.

Sgt. Maj. Brad Pirmantgen, the operations Sergeant Major for 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division out of Ft. Drum, NY, discovered a piece of unknown material in a motorpool, bearing an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) number on it. Laneve conducted an Internet search using the UL number, and found the material to be made of a Kevlar composite. He then contacted the manufacturer, Armour Tex, and was informed that a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick piece could withstand a 7.62 mm round.

Laneve, with the assistance of Cpt. Timothy Gallagher, went through the process of getting the project funded and ordering the material in



CW2 Mick Madden and SSG David Fento stand beside a Humvee they fitted with the kevlar armored panel modification.

1- $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick sheets. "We had to find a way to better protect our soldiers," said Laneve.

"It was through the grace of God that this material was discovered," said Gallagher. "The UL number just happened to be on the small piece [that was found] and we did an Internet search to find out what it was and who made it. Steel would never work in this terrain and environment due to the weight. It would have totally overloaded the Hummer and torn up the suspension."

The project was turned over to Chief Warrant Officer Mick Madden, the Motor Officer for 1st Brigade. Madden and his Motor Sergeant, Staff Sgt. David Fento, began the modification process by deciding where to hang the slabs of Kevlar

panels on the Hummer, and then measuring off the pieces to fit. They cut the thick material to size, and then came up with nuts, bolts and hardware strong enough to hold it all together. "It was all trial and error at first," said Fento. The muscular 17-year Army veteran from Oil City, PA, explained that they completed the installation by painting the shield a flat black to match the Hummer.

Chief Madden calculates that it takes about \$2,100 worth of material and hardware to modify one Hummer. The soft-spoken Warrant Officer from Council Bluffs, Iowa, said that the mod adds about 500 pounds to the vehicle, less than half the weight of steel.

See Kevlar Pg. 11





New law provides military more tax breaks

RICHMOND, Va. (Army News Service, Feb. 6, 2004) — The Internal Revenue Service is helping taxpayers use a new law that adds deductions for some reservists, expands the definition of combat zone, and provides income exclusions for military death-benefit payments and certain home sales.

President Bush signed into law the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 on Nov. 11 with retroactive provisions making it beneficial for some Soldiers to file amended returns on form 1040X.

"The IRS asks them to put the words "Military Family Tax Relief Act" in red at the top of such (amended) returns to speed processing," said IRS spokeswoman Gloria Wajciechowski.

The new law doubled the benefit paid to survivors of deceased Armed Forces members to \$12,000, made the entire amount tax-free and made the changes effective for deaths occurring after Sept. 10, 2001. Previously, only \$3,000 was tax-free.

"Recipients who already paid tax on benefits received for deaths after the effective date may file an amended return on Form 1040X, reducing their adjusted gross income by the \$3,000 they had reported as taxable," Wajciechowski said. "Those who receive such "gratuity" benefits in 2003 and future years will not have to report them on their tax returns."

Taxpayers may exclude gain on a home sale, provided they have owned and used the home as a principal residence for two of the five years

before the sale. A reduced maximum exclusion may apply to those who satisfy part of the two-year rule. Military personnel often retain ownership of a home while away on duty, but eventually sell it without returning to live in it, perhaps failing the use test completely, IRS officials said.

The new law allows persons on qualified extended duty in the U.S. Armed Services or the Foreign Service to suspend this five-year test period for up to 10 years of such duty time. A taxpayer is on qualified extended duty when at a duty station that is at least 50 miles from the residence sold, or when residing under orders in government housing, for more than 90 days or for an indefinite period.

This change applies to home sales after May 6, 1997. A taxpayer may use this provision for only one property at a time and may exclude gain on only one home sale in any two-year period. Although an amended return must usually be filed within three years of the original return's due date, the law gives qualifying taxpayers who sold a home before 2001 until Nov. 10, 2004, to file an amended return claiming the exclusion.

Also under the new law, National Guard and Army Reserve members who stay overnight more than 100 miles away from home for a drill or meeting may deduct unreimbursed travel expenses (transportation, meals and lodging) as an above-the-line deduction. The deduction is limited to the rates for such expenses authorized



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Kandahar Fire Department Tip of the Week

Cigarette butts will be emptied into butt cans and not in trashcans. Smoking materials are the leading cause of fire deaths and the third leading cause of fire injuries in the United States. In 1998, there were 140,800 fires associated with smoking materials, resulting in 903 deaths, 2,453 injuries and \$412 million in property damage.

In case of fire or emergency, contact the KAF fire department hotline at **841-1225**

Submitted by TSgt Michael Hoesch, Assistant Fire Chief





for federal employees, including per diem in lieu of subsistence. This provision is effective for tax years after 2002.

For 2003 returns, IRS officials said taxpayers should use Form 2106 or 2106-EZ to figure the deduction amount and carry it as a "write-in" to Form 1040, line 33, putting the letters "RC" and the amount on the dotted line and include this subtraction in the entry for line 33.

Under another provision, payments made after Nov. 11, 2003,

under the Department of Defense Homeowners Assistance Program, to offset the adverse effects on housing values of military base realignments or closures, will be excludable from income as a fringe benefit.

In addition, the definition of "combat zone" was expanded under the new law to include contingency operations. The various extensions granted to combat-zone participants to hold off on filing returns or paying taxes until after they return will also apply to those serving in contingency operations, as

designated by the Secretary of Defense, IRS officials said.

Soldiers who think they may need to file an amendment to benefit from the new law, but cannot find a copy of their tax return for a previous year, may use Form 4506, "Request for Copy or Transcript of Return," to get an earlier year's tax return, Wajciechowski said. This form and Form 1040X are available on the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov, or by calling 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).

KANDAHAR WEEKLY FORECAST

	Mon Feb 16	Tue Feb 17	Wed Feb 18	Thur Feb 19	Fri Feb 20	Sat Feb 21	Sun Feb 22
	Partly Cloudy With Dust And Haze	Partly Cloudy With Dust And Haze	Mostly Cloudy With Dust And Haze	Partly Cloudy With Dust And Haze	Partly Cloudy Windy And Dusty	Partly sunny with haze	Mostly Sunny
HIGH	75	72	75	79	77	70	67
LOW	46	45	43	43	46	41	37
SUNRISE	0217	0216	0215	0214	0213	0212	0211
SUNSET	1324	1325	1325	1326	1327	1328	1329

KANDAHAR COMBAT WEATHER TEAM

"Come One, Come All"

What: Open Mike Nights

Where: In Front of the Green Bean Coffee Shop

When: Every Sun. 1400 - 1700 Z

Who's Invited: Musicians, Poets, Singers and Comedians

***Contact: Sgt. Pawlowski of Base Ops.
841-1115 or 841-1247***





World News

Top U.S. Commander Escapes Attack in Iraq

By LEE KEATH

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — The top U.S. commander in the Middle East came under a bold attack Thursday by gunmen in the turbulent Iraqi city of Fallujah. No Americans were hurt, but a local police official said two Iraqis were killed in the shooting.

Also Thursday, a U.N. envoy told Iraq's leading Shiite cleric the world was 100 percent behind his demand for national elections, but there was no sign of agreement on when a vote would be held - the central issue in Shiite opposition to the U.S. plan for handing over power to Iraqis this summer.

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard cautioned in New York, however, that Brahimi was not endorsing the position of either side.

"I think there was a bit of a misunderstanding of what he said... Elections are the right way to go. When could they be organized? That's the issue," Eckhard said.

In Fallujah, residents said the Iraqis died as U.S. troops sprayed the area with gunfire after insurgents ambushed Gen. John Abizaid's convoy as it pulled into the headquarters of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps in the Sunni Triangle city 50 miles west of Baghdad.

Police said the car in which the slain Iraqis were riding was riddled with bullets holes, apparently from a heavy-caliber machine gun.

"We heard from a citizen that someone was killed in a car," Fallujah police Lt. Omar Ali said. "We sent our patrols to the site of the incident. When we arrived there, we saw American forces. They took

two dead, put them in a vehicle and left."

One Fallujah man, who would not give his name, said the Americans fired indiscriminately.

"This is a crime that Americans are doing such things to the people," he told Associated Press Television News. "They attack them. This is because they are scared. They just attack indiscriminately."



The attackers fired rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles from neighboring rooftops and a mosque as Abizaid's convoy pulled into the civil defense headquarters. U.S. troops returned fire, and the convoy pulled away.

A defense official in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was likely the insurgents had been tipped off to the presence of the senior general. But Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy operations chief in Baghdad, told journalists he wasn't ready to draw that conclusion.

Insurgents have apparently accelerated attacks against U.S. forces and their Iraqi allies in an effort to wreck the planned June 30 handover of power. Two suicide bombings against Iraqi targets on Tuesday and Wednesday killed up to 100 people. Two American soldiers were killed and another was wounded Wednesday

evening by a roadside bomb in Baghdad, the U.S. military said.

A volley of eight mortars was fired Thursday toward a U.S. military base in Baghdad, damaging several cars and lightly wounding three U.S. soldiers, said Kimmitt, the military's deputy operations chief in Baghdad.

Amid the violence, Iraq's U.S. administrators have been trying to overcome criticism of the handover plan from the influential Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani.

The ayatollah demands elections be held to create a provisional legislature, but the United States contends there's no time to properly organize a ballot before the deadline. The U.N. team, which is assessing if elections are possible and examining alternatives, met al-Sistani for two hours at his home in the Shiite holy city of Najaf.

"Al-Sistani is still insisting on the elections," the head of the team, Lakhdar Brahimi, told journalists afterward in Najaf, 90 miles south of Baghdad.

"We are with him 100 percent because elections are the best way to establish a state that serves the interests of its people," he said, adding that al-Sistani and the U.N. experts agreed that an election should be "well-prepared."

In New York, U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the team's discussions since it arrived Sunday have shown a consensus "that direct national elections are the best way" to establish a legitimate government but also that a vote "must be organized in technical, secu-

Cont. on next Pg.





World News

U.S. Soldier Killed in Afghan Mine Blast

By **STEPHEN GRAHAM**
Associated Press Writer

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—A U.S. soldier died and nine others were wounded when an anti-tank mine exploded underneath their Humvee in eastern Afghanistan, the military said Saturday.

Investigators were trying to determine whether the mine, which exploded Friday, was targeted at the U.S. patrol or was one of the many unexploded munitions that litter Afghanistan after more than two decades of war.

"It's hard to tell if it was a deliberate attack or just a leftover mine," U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said.

Four of the wounded Americans were treated at the scene while a helicopter evacuated the others to a hospital in Bagram, at the main U.S. base in the country. Two were later flown to an American military hospital in Germany for treatment, Hilferty said.



The soldiers were from the 10th Mountain Division, based in Fort Drum, N.Y. Their names were not released.

The blast occurred near Ghazni, about 80 miles south of Kabul. A Jan. 30 explosion at an arms dump in the area killed

eight U.S. soldiers in what the military said appeared to have been an accident.

Since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom following the Sept. 11 attacks, 109 U.S. troops have died. About two-thirds of those deaths occurred in Afghanistan, many in accidents, with the rest in other countries.

More than 100 people have died in violence in Afghanistan since the start of this year, as a Taliban-led insurgency roils the south and east of the country, casting doubt on plans for national elections this summer.

In the latest deadly attack, a remote-controlled mine exploded Friday in eastern Khost province, killing a police officer and a civilian. Five civilians and another policeman were also injured.

That attack came hours after some 20 rockets were fired at the airport in Khost city that houses the third-largest U.S. base in Afghanistan, causing no casualties and drawing retaliatory airstrikes from American forces.

Cont from Pg. 4

...rity and political conditions that give the best chance of producing a result that reflects the wishes of the Iraqi electorate."

Eckhard said the issue is when elections can be held.

Al-Sistani has refused to meet with U.S. officials, including the top American administrator, L. Paul Bremer. He has also demanded that an elected legislature approve a temporary constitution still being drawn up, rather than the U.S.-picked Iraqi Governing Council.

The U.S. plan calls for a temporary legislature to be picked by regional "caucuses" so the June 30 transfer can go ahead, then for national elections in early 2005. But al-Sistani has insisted on elections before the transfer.

Support from the 75-year-old cleric is key for the U.S. handover plan, since his rulings are widely respected among Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority. His demands for elections prompted demonstrations by tens of thousands of his supporters last month, forcing Washington to request the U.N. mission.

U.S. officials say they're willing to adjust the caucuses plan but oppose any delay

in the handover. Al-Sistani calls the caucuses undemocratic and says it's possible to properly organize a ballot before the deadline. Officials in al-Sistani's office refused to comment on Wednesday's meeting.

The Arab newspaper Al-Hayat cited sources close to al-Sistani saying that if experts feel elections can be properly organized within 10 months, he is willing to delay the handover of sovereignty - or to carry out just a partial handover - long enough to allow the vote to take place.





THE SPORTS

Earnhardt Jr. Wins His First Daytona 500

By PAUL NEWBERRY
AP Sports Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Dale Earnhardt Jr., taking a page from the old man, barreled past Tony Stewart and won the Daytona 500 Sunday on the same track that claimed his father's life three years ago.

Junior showed the impatience of youth, needing only five tries to win the race that bedeviled his later father for 19 years.

"He was over in the passenger side with me," the 29-year-old Earnhardt said during a jubilant celebration in Victory Lane. "I'm sure he was having a blast."

The race was attended by President Bush, launched the Nextel Cup era and came six years to the day that the Intimidator won his first - and only - Daytona 500 on his 20th try. It's still one of the sport's most cherished scenes, the Intimidator driving down pit road while every rival crew lined up to congratulate him before he pulled into Victory Lane.

Three years later, Earnhardt was killed on a last-lap crash in the 500, depriving the sport of a seven-time champion and its most famous driver. Well, the next generation is in good hands.

In a move that must have been borrowed from the Intimidator, Earnhardt Jr. dipped to the inside without any drafting help and went past Stewart in the trioal with 20 laps remaining.

"I can't believe I passed him by myself," Junior said. "I don't know what was going on. It

was like a magic trick."

Stewart tried valiantly to catch up, briefly pulling up beside Earnhardt coming out of turn two. But Junior showed his muscle on the backstretch, keeping Stewart in the rearview mirror.



That's where Stewart stayed the rest of the way. Earnhardt pulled away on the final lap, winning by about four car lengths while the crowd of 180,000 - many of them wearing Junior's colors - erupted in celebration.

Earnhardt came back around and stopped his car at the checkered finish line. He pumped his fist and jumped into the arms of his crew, who lifted him on their shoulders for all to see. Then he climbed back in the No. 8 Chevrolet, turning three doughnuts in the grass - just like his father after the 1998 race.

"I was taught so many lessons by this place before I ever got behind the wheel," Earnhardt said. "I'm glad I don't have to worry about (winning the 500) anymore. That's awesome."

Stewart led 97 laps - nearly half the 200-lap event - but he didn't have enough to hold off Earnhardt, who set the pace for 59.

"It's nice to see him get his victory, too," Stewart said. "I think his father is proud today. I wanted to win the race. Trust me, if I could have held him off, I would have. "But there was no holding that kid back. Today was his day."

Rookie Scott Wimmer held on for a surprising third-place finish. He briefly held the lead after gambling on his final pit stop - taking only two tires - but he didn't have enough grip to hold on.

Wimmer still faces drunken-driving charges after crashing a team truck last month. NASCAR, which has a zero-tolerance policy on substance abuse, hasn't decided whether to punish the driver.

Kevin Harvick and Jimmie Johnson rounded out the top five. Pole-winner Greg Biffle had to start from the back of the 43-car field after changing an engine Saturday. That allowed Earnhardt to take the green flag from the pole.

A frightening crash on lap 72 took out defending race winner Michael Waltrip, whose car flipped at least three times and wound up landing on its roof in the backstretch. He wasn't injured.





THE SPORTS

West Beats East 136-132 in All-Star Game

By GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Shaquille O'Neal earned two victories in his home arena Sunday night: The Western Conference All-Stars got a 136-132 victory over the East, and he won the MVP award with 24 points, 11 rebounds, nine dunks and as much showmanship as the league's dominant center could muster in a building filled with stars.

"Now you see why you've got to foul him when the games count," West coach Flip Saunders said. "That guy is an unbelievable athlete, and his size makes him almost unstoppable. He could be some kind of dancer in another life. It was really a special sight to see."

The court was ringed with celebrities at the 53rd edition of the NBA's midseason show-



case, and O'Neal did more than anyone to keep them entertained. The erstwhile movie star and rapper loves the spotlight, even when it's focused on the Lakers' dysfunctions - but this game was nothing but fun.

"Can you dig it? Can you dig it?" O'Neal shouted to his fans after accepting the MVP trophy from David Stern.

Though the somewhat ragtag game stubbornly refused to conform to Hollywood standards of excitement and drama, Ray Allen and Tim Duncan made three free throws in the closing seconds to clinch the victory. Kobe Bryant, O'Neal's teammate with the Los Angeles Lakers, scored 20 points on 9-of-12 shooting.

In his eighth All-Star game appearance, Shaq became the 12th player to win the MVP award in his own arena. He scored 10 points in the third quarter to put the West ahead, and his dunk on a pass from Bryant with 1:56 left was a key basket.

"I'm not really one known to be taking over an All-Star game," said O'Neal, who shared the MVP award with Duncan four years ago. "This is a couple of days you get to

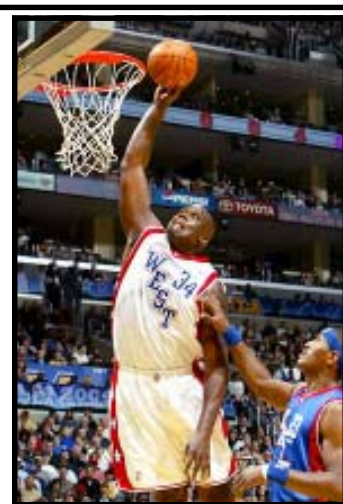
spend with the best players in this league, so I just wanted to come out and have a good time.

Even the NBA's best seemed impressed by the number of pop-culture icons in attendance. A few East All-Stars wandered out to the court early to catch Beyonce's halftime show, and Houston's Steve Francis pulled up short while chasing a loose ball headed in the direction of hip-hop moguls P. Diddy and Jay-Z.

The rest of the night was a laid-back affair featuring an amazing 44 dunks. Highlight-reel plays were the norm, with several players hanging on the rim and others throwing creative passes, such as Allen Iverson's off-the-backboard lob to Tracy McGrady.

"I was the only one that was playing any defense tonight, and that's why I didn't score a lot," laughed Sacramento's Peja Stojakovic, who had five points in his third All-Star game.

New Orleans' Jamaal Magloire, a surprise first-time selection to the East team, had 19 points and eight rebounds. Seven East players finished in double figures, including Kenyon Martin's 17 points and Jermaine O'Neal's



16.

"I don't think this will be my last time on this stage, but I wanted to play as if it was," Magloire said. "You're going to see a lot more of me, as far as all-star games go."

But Shaq and Kobe were the main attraction, as they always are at home. Bryant showed up late to the game, and got booed later when he made an uncontested layup instead of a dunk - but he didn't care.

"Nowadays with all the hoopla that surrounds the All-Star game, you kind of lose sight of the game," Bryant said. "It was a nail-biter at the end. It was a good show."





HEADLINERS



1. Police in Wichita, Kansas, arrested a 22-year-old man at an airport hotel after he tried to pass two (counterfeit) \$16 bills.

2. A man in Johannesburg, South Africa, shot his 49-year-old friend in the face, seriously wounding him, while the two practiced shooting beer cans off each other's head.

3. A company trying to continue its five-year perfect safety record showed its workers a film aimed at encouraging the use of safety goggles on the job. According to Industrial Machinery News, the film's depiction of gory industrial accidents was so graphic that twenty-five workers suffered minor injuries in their rush to leave the screening room. Thirteen others fainted, and one man required seven stitches after he cut his head falling off a chair while watching the film.

4. The Chico, California, City Council enacted a ban on nuclear weapons, setting a \$500 fine for anyone detonating one within city limits.

5. A bus carrying five passengers was hit by a car in St. Louis, but by the time police arrived on the scene, fourteen pedestrians had boarded the bus and had begun to complain of whiplash injuries and back pain.

6. Swedish business consultant Ulf af Trolle labored 13 years on a book about Swedish economic solutions. He took the 250-page manuscript to be copied, only to have it reduced to 50,000 strips of paper in seconds when a worker confused the copier with the shredder.

7. A convict broke out of jail in Washington D.C., then a few days later accompanied his girlfriend to her trial for robbery. At lunch, he went out for a sandwich. She needed to see him, and thus had him paged. Police officers recognized his name and arrested him as he

returned to the courthouse in a car he had stolen over the lunch hour.

8. Police in Radnor, Pennsylvania, interrogated a suspect by placing a metal colander on his head and connecting it with wires to a photocopy machine. The message "He's lying" was placed in the copier, and police pressed the copy button each time they thought the suspect wasn't telling the truth. Believing the "lie detector" was working, the suspect confessed.

9. When two service station attendants in Ionia, Michigan, refused to hand over the cash to an intoxicated robber, the man threatened to call the police. They still refused, so the robber called the police and was arrested.

10. A Los Angeles man who later said he was "tired of walking," stole a steamroller and led police on a 5 mph chase until an officer stepped aboard and brought the vehicle to a stop.

11. A fierce gust of wind blew 45-year-old Vittorio Luise's car into a river near Naples, Italy, in 1983. He managed to break a window, climb out and swim to shore — where a tree blew over and killed him.

12. Mike Stewart, 31, of Dallas was filming a movie in 1983 on the dangers of low-level bridges when the truck he was standing on passed under a low-level bridge — killing him.

13. Walter Hallas, a 26-year-old store clerk in Leeds, England, was so afraid of dentists that in 1979 he asked a fellow worker to try to cure his toothache by punching him in the jaw. The punch caused Hallas to fall down, hitting his head, and he died of a fractured skull.

14. Two West German motorists had an all-too-literal head-on collision in heavy fog near the small town of Guetersloh. Each was guiding his car at a snail's pace near the center of the road. At the moment of impact their heads were both out of the windows when they





HEADLINERS

smacked together. Both men were hospitalized with severe head injuries. Their cars weren't scratched.

15. George Schwartz, owner of a factory in Providence, R.I., narrowly escaped death when a 1983 blast flattened his factory except for one wall. After treatment for minor injuries, he returned to the scene to search for files. The remaining wall then collapsed on him, killing him.

16. Depressed since he could not find a job, 42-year-old Romolo Ribolla, in 1981, sat in his kitchen near Pisa, Italy, with a gun in his hand threatening to kill himself. His wife pleaded for him not to do it, and after about an hour he burst into tears and threw the gun to the floor. It went off and killed his wife.

17. In 1983, a Mrs. Carson of Lake Kushaqua, N.Y., was laid out in her coffin, presumed dead of heart disease. As mourners watched, she suddenly sat up. Her daughter dropped dead of fright.

18. A man hit by a car in New York in 1977 got up uninjured, but laid back down in front of the car when a bystander told him to pretend he was hurt so he could collect insurance money. The car rolled forward and crushed him to death.

19. Surprised while burgling a house in Antwerp, Belgium, a thief fled out the back door, clambered over a nine-foot wall, dropped down and found himself in the city prison.

20. In 1976 a twenty-two-year-old Irishman, Bob Finnegan, was crossing the busy Falls Road in Belfast, when he was struck by a taxi and flung over its roof. The taxi drove away and, as Finnegan lay stunned in the road, another car ran into him, rolling him into the gutter. It too drove on. As a knot of gawkers gathered to examine the magnetic Irishman, a delivery van plowed through the crowd, leav-

ing in its wake three injured bystanders and an even more battered Bob Finnegan. When a fourth vehicle came along, the crowd wisely scattered and only one person was hit, Bob Finnegan. In the space of two minutes Finnegan suffered a fractured skull, broken pelvis, broken leg, and other assorted injuries. Hospital officials said he would recover.

21. While motorcycling through the Hungarian countryside, Cristo Falatti came up to a railway line just as the crossing gates were coming down. While he sat idling, he was joined by a farmer with a goat, which the farmer tethered to the crossing gate. A few moments later a horse and cart drew up behind Falatti, followed in short order by a man in a sports car. When the train roared through the crossing, the horse startled and bit Falatti on the arm. Not a man to be trifled with, Falatti responded by punching the horse in the head. In consequence the horse's owner jumped down from his cart and began scuffling with the motorcyclist. The horse, which was not up to this sort of excitement, backed away briskly, smashing the cart into the sports car. At this, the sports car driver leaped out of his car and joined the fray. The farmer came forward to try to pacify the three flailing men. As he did so, the crossing gates rose and his goat was strangled. At last report, the insurance companies were still trying to sort out the claims.





New vehicles helping against IEDs



By Cpl. Joe Niesen
February 11, 2004

FOB RIDGWAY, Iraq(Army News Service, Feb. 11, 2004) — The U.S. Army has a few new weapons to use in its war against the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices on Iraq's roadways.

The Husky, Meerkat, Buffalo, and RG-31 armored car are now being used by soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division's Task Force Pathfinder. The unit comprises soldiers from a number of active Army, Reserve, and National Guard units attached to the 82nd.

The soldiers, many of whom had never seen the equipment prior to the training they received in theater, have quickly grown fond of the vehicles which were designed both in the United States and South Africa.

"All of our training has been off-the-cuff," said Capt. Michael Biankowski, commander, A Company, 27th Engineers and Task Force Pathfinder.

The soldiers of Pathfinder had to learn everything about the vehicles in theater. The mechanics had to learn how to

repair them, the operators how to drive them, and commanders how to use them. For operators, the driving is the easy part; it's learning to operate and interpret the data collected by the sensors while driving that is the challenge.

"Probably the hardest part is the multitasking involved. You have to drive, listen and watch both the screen and the road around you as you drive," said Cpl. Robert Scott, a vehicle operator on the Husky detection vehicle.

The vehicles, primarily designed to detect buried mines, have been searching the roadways for IEDs and other threats to soldiers on convoys and patrols. So far, the equipment has proven effective for a number of reasons, chiefly the detection abilities of the Husky and Meerkat vehicles.

"We've found at least six IEDs in the short time that we have had the vehicles," said 1st Lt. David Moore, a platoon leader with A Company, 27th Engineers, assigned to the Task Force.

Another reason the soldiers in Task Force Pathfinder have taken to the vehicles is the fact that each is heavily armored and designed to resist blasts from both mines and IEDs.

"These vehicles are designed to take a blast," said Pfc. Lester Rhodes, a combat engineer and operator of the RG-31 armored car. "The safety given by these vehicles allows us to focus more energy on finding the rounds. Plus, it (the RG-31) is comfortable, like riding in an armored Cadillac."

The Task Force, since acquiring the equipment, has attempted to support the entire division's area of responsibility. The vehicles will be handed over to replacing units and remain in theater as long as the threat of IEDs exists.

However, many of the soldiers assigned to Pathfinder said they are hopeful that the equipment will be standard issue for engineering units.

"At first, I thought that it was just another Army toy," said Scott. "After taking them out on missions and finding IEDs, they definitely do the job. They are the best pieces of equipment out there."

A few of the vehicles have already been sent to the combat engineer school at Fort Leonardwood, Mo., where soldiers are now being trained, according to Biankowski.

The team will continue to provide support to units in the area and prepare to train its replacements. The awkward-looking vehicles will visit various bases and attempt to ensure that at least the routes they cover will be free of IEDs, and soldiers can feel a little safer as they continue to traverse and patrol Iraq's dangerous roads.

"Every round we find is one less that could injure or kill a Soldier," said Sgt. 1st Class Martin Humphreys, a Pathfinder platoon sergeant. "So I'm glad we have this equipment."





LMTV with troop seats relocated in the center gives troops the tactical advantage.

In addition to the Kevlar Hummer Modification, Madden, Fento and their team have also designed Kevlar panels for the LMTV 2 ½ ton truck. They also designed a more effective method of positioning the troop seats in the back of the LMTV that places the seats in the center of the bed, allowing soldiers to face outward instead of inward as originally designed. "This method [of sitting] where all the guns are pointing out, presents a fearful target for the enemy," said 2-22 Infantry Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Vincent Comacho. "It has dramatically improved our maneuverability."

"What we did was looked at it from a logical and tactical standpoint," said Madden. "A soldier is more effective facing out than if he has to turn around to see or shoot. We added a piece of angle iron on either end [of the bench] to bolt the seats down and now you have a much better design."

This effectively gives the troops a better view of their surround-

ings and offers them far more tactical maneuverability than before. The team has also designed a method of installing a 50-caliber machinegun mount to the bed of the Hummer, making it a more formidable platform.

They have modified 45 vehicles thus far, with plans to complete a total of 65. "It makes it all worthwhile knowing that what we're doing is making it safer for the guys," said Fento. He pointed to a damaged Hummer that had been involved in a firefight and showed scuffmarks where bullets had impacted the Kevlar shield and bounced off. "The mod has proved its worth many times over," added Fento. "The guys going out every day [looking for the enemy] certainly appreciate it. I'm happy we can do this for them."

As Chief Madden and Staff Sgt. Fento returned to their work, they are hopeful that the modifications they have implemented, will help protect servicemembers of all branches in whatever conflict they may be involved in for years to come.

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